R E P O R T R E S U M E S

ED 010 755 RE 000 004

THE READING OF THE CULTURALLY DISADVANTAGED.

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REPORT NUMBER OP-80 PUB DATE OCT 66
EDRS PRICE MF-$0.09 HC-$1.68 42P.

DESCRIPTORS- *READING INTERESTS, *ILLITERATE ADULTS, *CULTURALLY DISADVANTAGED, *INTEREST RESEARCH, *SOCIOECONOMIC INFLUENCES, CHILDREN, LIBRARY SERVICES, CULTURAL FACTORS, READING MATERIALS, READING ABILITY, READING ACHIEVEMENT, READING FAILURE, ATTITUDES, URBANA

ASPECTS OF READING RELATED TO CULTURALLY DISADVANTAGED ADULTS AND CHILDREN ARE SURVEYED. THE MAIN TOPICS OF DISCUSSION BASED ON RESEARCH AND LITERATURE ARE READING ABILITY OF DISADVANTAGED ADULTS, READING ABILITY OF DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN, CAUSES OF READING PROBLEMS AMONT THE DISADVANTAGED, READING INTERESTS, LIBRARY USE BY DISADVANTAGED ADULTS, AND THE KINDS OF READING PREFERRED BY DISADVANTAGED ADULTS. CULTURALLY DEPRIVED PEOPLE ARE DEFINED AS THOSE AMERICANS WHO BELONG TO THE LOWER SOCIOECONOMIC GROUP AND WHO HAVE FEWER OPPORTUNITIES THAN THE AVERAGE CITIZEN. RESEARCH ON THE READING ABILITY OF DISADVANTAGED ADULTS HAS SHOWN THAT THEY READ LESS THAN MORE EDUCATED PEOPLE AND COMPRISE A LARGE NUMBER OF THE AMERICAN FUNCTIONAL ILLITERATES. CORRELATIONS WERE FOUND BETWEEN CHILDREN'S READING ACHIEVEMENT AND SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS. THE HOME ENVIRONMENT OF LOWER CLASS CHILDREN CONTRIBUTES TO READING RETARDATION. ADULTS WHO HAVE HAD MORE EDUCATIONAL TRAINING TEND TO MAKE GREATER USE OF LIBRARY FACILITIES. LOWER CLASS PEOPLE READ MAGAZINES AND PAPERS SOMEWHAT LESS THAN THOSE FROM HIGHER CLASSES. DIFFERENCES, HOWEVER, ARE NOT AS GREAT AS THOSE FOUND IN BOOK READING. A POSITIVE CORRELATION EXISTS BETWEEN FICTION READING AND INCOME LEVEL, AND BETWEEN CHOICE OF AUTHORS AND SOCIOECONOMIC LEVEL. LOWER CLASS PEOPLE TEND TO READ THE NEWSPAPER FOR ENTERTAINMENT, SENSATIONAL NEWS, AND PICTORIAL MATERIAL. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LIBRARIES ARE MADE. A BIBLIOGRAPHY, GENERAL REFERENCES, AND TABLES ARE INCLUDED. (BK)

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Number 80 October 1966

THE READING OF THE CULTURALLY DISADVANTAGED

by John McCrossan

A sizeable proportion of Americans are considered "culturally disadvantaged," since they have few educational, economic, or other kinds of opportunities. In order to serve this important segment of our population adequately, librarians should be familiar with the research studies on the reading of the disadvantaged, but many of them have appeared in periodicals which few librarians read: important findings on the reading of the disadvantaged are often hidden in lengthy reports of the reading of other groups; and some of the important studies are old and therefore not readily accessible. In order to make the research findings more easily available to librarians and others who are interested in the reading of disadvantaged adults or children, an extensive survey of reading research has been made, and the results of many of the pertinent studies are summarized in this paper. Since library use is related to reading habits, the results of some of the major library use studies are included.

"Culturally disadvantaged" is a current term sometimes used to describe those Americans who belong to subcultures which are different from and generally less advanced than the dominant culture. At other times the term is used to refer to all those Americans who belong to the lower socio-economic group and are disadvantaged in the sense that they have fewer opportunities than the average citizen. In this paper, the term is used in the latter sense, and "educationally disadvantaged," "culturally deprived," "underprivileged," "lower socio-economic group," "lower socio-economic class," and other such terms are used synonymously. Bloom, Davis, and Hess also use "culturally disadvantaged" in this broad sense. They define the disadvantaged as the one-third of high-school entrants who do not complete secondary education, including both natives of America's urban and rural areas and "in-migrants" from Puerto Rico, Mexico, and the rural South.[1]

Although it would be impossible to ascertain the exact proportion of Americans who are culturally disadvantaged, one can get some idea by studying the figures on income and education, since both poverty and limited education are associated with cultural disadvantage. A report issued by the Conference on Economic Progress indicates that in 1960 "more than 77 million Americans, or more than two-fifths of a nation lived in poverty or deprivation."

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> In poverty were almost 10 1/2 million multiple-person families with annual incomes under $4,000, and almost 4 million unattached individuals with annual incomes under $2,000--approximately 38 million Americans or more than one-fifth of a nation. In deprivation, above poverty but short of minimum requirements for a modestly comfortable level of living, there were almost 10 1/3 million families with incomes from $4,000 to just under $6,000 and more than 2 million unattached individuals with incomes from $2,000 to just under $3,000--more than 39 million Americans, or also more than one-fifth of a nation.[2]

In 1960 there were 8,248,000 American adults who had completed less than five years of schooling out of a total of 99,024,000 persons of 25 years old and over; 13,710,000 had completed five to seven years; and 17,397,000 had completed eight years. In other words, about forty percent of American adults had only eight years of education or less.[3] In 1963, 15,500,000 heads of American families (or 33 percent of the total) had completed only eight years or less of education.[4]

Francis Gregory estimated that there were 31 million American workers who were educationally disadvantaged: "One million are totally illiterate, 10 million are semiliterate, and 20 million, although literate, do not have educational qualifications to compete in today's labor market."[5]

The numbers of the disadvantaged are constantly increasing in large cities. According to a report issued by the Educational Policies Commission, there has been a "large-scale migration" of the disadvantaged rural population, the rural poor moving from "the agrarian South, Southwest, and Puerto Rico" to large urban centers of the United States.[6] Discussing the fact that the proportion of large-city children who are deprived is constantly increasing, Riessman wrote: "In 1950, approximately one child out of every ten in the fourteen largest cities of the United States was 'culturally deprived.' By 1960, this figure had risen to one in three. This ever increasing trend is due to their rapid migration to urban centers. By 1970, it is estimated there may be one deprived child for every two enrolled in schools in these large cities."[7]

There is some relationship between cultural disadvantage and race. According to Riessman, "a large portion of the current disadvantaged population is composed of cultural and racial minorities."[8] Benjamin McKendall says that cultural disadvantage is primarily a Negro problem: "In the South, and in most urban areas of the North, cultural disadvantage is primarily a Negro problem. Other groups--Mexican-Americans along the border states and in California; Puerto Ricans in New York; the American Indian in the Southwest; the indigent white of Appalachia and the rural South--also have been adversely affected by these forces, but the American Negro is more visible, and, with the thrust of the civil rights movement, more vocal."[9] The report published by the Conference on Economic Progress indicates that a substantially larger proportion of nonwhites than whites live in poverty in America. According to that report "more than 60 percent of nonwhite families were living in poverty in 1960, contrasted with 28 1/2 percent of white families," and almost 32 percent of nonwhites earned less than $2,000 annually compared with 11 percent of whites.[10] However, since whites constitute a much larger proportion of the American population than nonwhites, the total number of whites who are disadvantaged is probably as large as or larger than the total number of disadvantaged nonwhites.

Reading Ability of the Culturally Disadvantaged

There has been little research on the reading ability of disadvantaged adults, but the few studies which have been carried out indicate that lower-class adults generally have less reading skill than other adults. Likewise, research on the reading of underprivileged children supports the contention that they generally have less reading ability than other children. Riessman quotes the estimate that, in general, 15 to 20 percent of school children have some reading disability "while among educationally deprived children the disability estimate is as high as 50 per cent."[11] The reasons why the disadvantaged have less reading ability than others are not clear, but many experts have speculated that environment, motivation, health, education, IQ, or a combination of these factors may be responsible.

A number of investigators have found that while a majority of disadvantaged adults or children are poor readers, a small proportion are good readers. It is important to bear this in mind because a cursory reading of some of the research reports might give one the impression that all the disadvantaged have little reading skill. Some investigators, finding that most disadvantaged people are poor readers, devote a great deal of their reports to a discussion of these poor readers and include little if any discussion of the minority of the disadvantaged who were found to be good readers.

Reading Ability of Disadvantaged Adults

Referring to the meagre amount of research in adult reading ability, Gray said in 1956: "Although objective studies of reading achievement have been made widely among children during the last four decades, this is not true in the case of adults. Unfortunately the limited number of studies reported relate to only very small segments of our civilian population or to specialized groups, such as men in the armed forces. Furthermore, many of the civilian studies which are most valuable...were made about two decades ago."[12] Since then, the situation has changed little. Only a few studies of adult reading ability have been made in recent years, and even fewer have been done which deal specifically with the ability of the disadvantaged adults.

One of the most thorough studies of adult reading was done by Guy Thomas Buswell about three decades ago. Buswell studied the reading of over one thousand adults and, among other things, he found that adults of lower educational level had considerably less reading skill than other adults: " There is a marked positive relation between the amount of education and ability to read as measured by the test [a test constructed by Buswell especially for the study]. The median score for the 124 subjects who had not gone beyond Grade VI in school was 25.0; for those who had gone two years further the median score showed a gain of 18.8 points. Consistently higher medians are shown for the three remaining grade groups, the median for those who had taken some work in college being 65.1."[13] Table 1 indicates the scores received on Buswell's test by adults of different educational accomplishments and shows the strong positive relationship between amount of education and test scores, greater education being associated with higher scores. It is also interesting to note the

wide range of reading ability among people of the same educational level; for example, while the majority of adults with only a sixth-grade education or less received average or low reading scores, two such persons scored relatively high. On the other hand, of those with thirteen or more years of education, the majority received high scores, but some scored rather low. In other words, a minority of the educationally disadvantaged were found to be good readers, and a minority of those with much education were found to be poor readers.

TABLE 1

Scores on Reading Test for Adults Grouped by Last School Grade Attended*

Test Score	Last School Grade Attended				
	6 or below	7-8	9-10	11-12	13 or above
76-93	0	4	6	0	23
57-75	2	38	74	92	101
38-56	25	96	88	91	29
19-37	53	58	31	7	4
0-18	44	16	5	1	0

*Source: Buswell, p. 33.

Buswell also found that the reading ability of those Negroes tested was considerably below the ability of whites of similar educational attainments. For Negroes who had attended school six years or less, the average score was 21, while for whites of similar education the average was 31; and for Negroes who had attended school seven or more years, the average score was 37, while for whites of the same amount of education, the average was 55. Buswell speculated on the reasons for these rather large differences in the reading skill of the two races and concluded that the lower ability of the Negroes was probably due to the fact that many of them had been educated in inferior segregated schools in the South.[14]

Estimates of actual and functional illiteracy indicate that a considerable proportion of adult Americans are unable to read well, and a large percentage of the poor readers are educationally disadvantaged. Gray estimated the percentage of adult Americans who were functionally illiterate by studying reading test scores which adults had received when they were of school age, a decade or more prior to his investigation. He secured records of reading test scores received by over 14,000 fourth to twelfth grade pupils on the elementary and advanced forms of the Iowa Silent Reading Test, and discovered that the median reading scores advanced regularly from the fourth to the twelfth grade. His findings convinced him that "a large majority of the adults who discontinued school during the first four grades and who did not attain the fifth-grade norm now read no better, and in all probability less well, than when they left school." Gray added to those who had not finished the fourth grade all those pupils in higher grades who had not achieved the fifth-grade norm in reading and

those who had never attended school at all. He then estimated that fifteen percent of Americans over 25 years of age were functionally illiterate.[15]

According to more recent estimates based on U.S. Census figures, approximately eleven million American adults are illiterate or functionally illiterate. W. Vance Grant estimated that in 1960 there were approximately 3 million illiterates and more than 8 million functional illiterates in the United States.[16]

Reports on the reading ability of particular groups of disadvantaged adults indicate that a large proportion of them are very poor readers. One of the best of these investigations was a study of the reading ability of relief recipients residing in Cook County, Illinois. It was found that slightly more than half of the recipients were either illiterate or functionally illiterate. The Division of Research and Statistics of the Cook County Department of Public Aid undertook the study "to determine the literacy levels of all able-bodied persons aged 16 years and over who are not in school, are recipients of assistance, and who live in the Woodlawn area of the city of Chicago."[17] The New Stanford Reading Test was administered to all but those who were completely unable to read, those who were Spanish speaking, and those who were unable to see well enough to take the test, with the following results:

> There were 46 recipients or 6.8 percent of the sample who were illiterates, 22 of whom were the untested illiterates, or Spanish speaking, and 24 of whom tested out as illiterate, all unable to either read or write the English language. Between the scores of 2.6 and 5.9, there were 299 recipients or 43.9 percent, who, if added to the complete illiterates, constitute the total number of functional illiterates (persons achieving less than five completed years of schooling). That is to say, of the total sample of 680 recipients, there were 345 persons or 50.7 percent who tested out as functional illiterates.[18]

A small proportion of the relief recipients were quite good readers, 6.5% receiving scores of 10.0 or better which, according to the investigator indicated that they had "completed the learning of the fundamentals of reading."[19]

It has been found that a large proportion of prisoners are poor readers. Cortright found that at the Maryland State Penitentiary "70% of the inmates are adult functional illiterates." A large percentage of the prisoners were educationally disadvantaged--98 percent of them had not graduated from high school and only .001 percent had received a bachelor's degree.[20]

Reading Ability of Disadvantaged Children

Margaret Rhoads Ladd investigated the reading skill of 315 children enrolled in three public elementary schools of New York City and discovered only a slight relationship between reading ability and socio-economic status as measured by the Sims Socio-Economic Score Card. "The correlation of .16 found between reading age and the score on the Sims Socio-Economic Score

Card is just large enough to indicate a relationship reliably above zero, but one would conclude that the kind of socio-economic status measured by this test is not a very important factor in reading achievement, at least among a group which is relatively homogeneous in socio-economic status."[21] Ladd also studied the socio-economic status of the best and of the poorest readers--those whose scores were six standard deviations above or below the mean for their grade--and found that the best readers were of only "slightly higher average socio-economic status."[22]

Witty and Kopel commented on the Ladd study, however, and questioned the validity of the Sims Score Card:

> [In] Ladd's study...socioeconomic status as measured by the Sims Score Card proved to have little relationship to reading proficiency. Nevertheless, significant effects upon the reading of individuals are associated with subtle and interrelated environmental conditions, many of which are not measured by scales such as the Sims. Reading achievement of a high order reflects not only innate ability but also training modified by opportunity and motivation, factors patently related to economic stability and cultural milieu. Thus the books and magazines available in the home have been found to influence children's reading preferences and habits; moreover, the parents' attitude toward books is indubitably significant in fostering or impeding desirable growth.[23]

Helen Robinson surveyed a number of reading studies completed before her own study of reading failure and concluded that there was "little relationship between reading failure and education or ability of parents, socioeconomic status, foreign language in the home, or recordable attitudes." She also wrote that studies had not given "objective evidence of the relationship of socioeconomic status to reading disability or reading progress."[24] Robinson's own project entailed the investigation of a number of children with serious reading disabilities. She found that the reading failure of those children was not related to socio-economic status: "The occupations of the fathers showed considerable variety and indicated the wide range in socioeconomic status of the children examined. Seriousness of retardation seemed in no way related to either occupation of father or socioeconomic status."[25]

One of the many investigators who have found a relationship between socio-economic status and reading ability was Hubert A. Coleman who commented that "poor readers, as a group, come with surprising consistency from children of low socio-economic status."[26] Coleman studied a national sample of school children who were grouped into three socio-economic levels; he found that socio-economic status was related to achievement in various subjects, including reading: "There seems to be a definite relationship between socio-economic status and achievement in school subjects. Hence, from groups representing extremes in socio-economic status, one seems justified in looking for differences in achievement in reading, geography, history, and problem solving. These differences should favor the high socio-economic group."[27]

Harrison Gough compared sixth grade students in schools ranked as high, medium, and low on a scale of socio-economic status and reported some differences which favored the high- and medium-ranked schools. Comparing the high status school with the low status school, he found "a difference on vocabulary of 7.39 points in favor of the high status school, which is significant at the one per cent

level by the t test," while the differences in IQ, age, and reading were all significant at the five percent level. The differences between the high and average status schools were significant at the one percent level on status and vocabulary, but the other differences were not significant. The average and low status schools differed significantly at the five percent level on status and reading.[28] Gough concluded that socio-economic status had "a slight positive relationship" to academic achievement.[29]

William Sheldon and Lawrence Carrillo studied 868 students from eight schools and found certain socio-economic characteristics were related to reading skill. On the basis of their data, they concluded that size of family was "definitely" related to reading ability, and that "the smaller the family, excepting only children, the greater the per cent of good readers."[30] Other factors "definitely" related to reading ability, according to Sheldon and Carrillo, were number of books in the home and educational level of parents. They reported there was "some relationship" between reading ability and occupational status of the father, good readers tending to have fathers engaged in professional or managerial pursuits and poor readers having fathers engaged in agricultural, skilled, or semiskilled occupations. The investigators also found that while most of the children whose parents were employed in semiskilled or unskilled occupations were rather poor readers, a minority were good readers. According to the authors' criteria for good reading, 10 of the 208 good readers came from such families. On the other hand it was found that a minority of the more privileged children were poor readers, seven percent of the poor readers having parents who had completed college.[31]

Sybil Riden studied the effect of home and school environment on the ability of British children to learn to read. She compared children who lived in a good residential area, a poor residential area, and a village. The children who lived in the good residential area did better on reading tests than those who lived in the poor area, while the former group did only slightly better than children who lived in the village. Riden felt that "the main factor influencing reading ability was... intelligence" and "when reading standards were assessed by reading quotients based on mental instead of chronological ages, there was no significant difference between mean reading quotients in any of the three areas."[32]

Hill and Giammatteo studied a total of 223 third graders enrolled in three western Pennsylvania schools and found that socio-economic status was strongly related to achievement in vocabulary, reading, arithmetic, and problem solving. Each child was placed on a scale of socio-economic status, and the Iowa Test of Basic Skills was administered. High correlations resulted between status and achievement in the various subjects tested; for example, the correlation between socio-economic status and reading comprehension was .902 and the correlation between status and vocabulary was .838.[33]

> The means obtained indicate the children from the high socio-economic group by grade three are eight months ahead of the children from the low group in the area of vocabulary achievement. In reading comprehension achievement the range between

> the groups is equivalent to a full school term or nine months. A full six months difference is evidenced between the high and low groups in arithmetic skills. Problem solving...shows an eleven-month difference between the high and low groups. In total scores the high socio-economic group with a mean score of 3.9 was seven months advanced over the 3.2 mean score of the low socio-economic group.[34]

The authors also used the Scott-Foresman Basic Reading Texts to ascertain whether there were relationships between socio-economic status and different kinds of skills and found "positive correlations in each of the seven areas on the Scott-Foresman Basic Text tests....The results of the study strengthen the accumulative evidence that socio-economic status effects school achievement. Children from lower socio-economic areas do not by third grade overcome this cultural deficiency. It seems evident all scholastic achievement areas reported in this study are effected by socio-economic factors."[35]

Abraham Fabian studied reading disabilities among children in five different settings and found a higher incidence of such disabilities among those in clinical settings than among those enrolled in a public school. Fabian eliminated those with low IQ's and those with discontinuous schooling and found that the following percentages of children in various settings had considerable reading retardation:

in public school.....	10%
in child guidance clinics.....	33%
placement agencies.....	62.5%
children's observation unit of a psychiatric hospital.....	73%
special group of deprived children in a child guidance clinic.....	83%[36]

"It must be emphasized that the facts and figures cited...are clinical findings and not experimental results. Rather than a project specifically designed to establish the incidence of reading disability in children in different settings, this is a report of clinical observations made without previously structuring the test situations, without aliquot sampling or precise matching of subjects."[37]

Several studies indicate that children who are members of underdeveloped cultural groups have less reading skill than children who belong to more advanced groups. Yandell and Zintz found that certain minority group children did not understand American idioms as well as "Anglos." The investigators constructed a 90-item test by selecting idioms used in fourth, fifth, and sixth grade readers. The test was first given to a control group of 390 sixth grade Anglos in order to establish norms and then to 516 sixth graders--a mixture of Anglo, Spanish, Zuni, and Navajo ethnic groups. A significant difference was found between the means of the control group and of each of the minority groups. "Percentile ranks prepared on the control group indicated the 50th percentile to be a raw score of 71. Whereas, when compared to this control group, the median score for the Spanish-American ranked in the 5th percentile, the median score for the Zuni ranked in the 2nd percentile, and the median score for the Navajo ranked in the 1st percentile."[38]

Sarah Smilansky compared the academic progress of two groups of Israeli children, Group A being those who parents were from culturally advanced countries and Group B those whose parents were from underdeveloped countries. Group B children had considerably greater difficulty in reading and arithmetic than Group A children.

> ...by the end of grade I first level reading (fluent reading) had been reached by 54.8% of Group A and 5.6% of Group B. A further 22.6% of Group A had started reading (level 2) as against a further 15.3% in Group B. This left 79.1% of Group B and 22.6% of Group A who were completely unable to read. The serious relative failure shown on the part of children of underdeveloped background at the end of grade I is even more noteworthy by the end of grade II. At that stage, 79.5% of Group A had mastered the reading skill (level 1) as against 31.8% of Group B. Only 2.3% of Group A were entirely unable to read (level 3) as against 28.8% in Group B.[39]

Goldhor and McCrossan did a study of the reading skill of 1,718 children enrolled in the public schools of Evansville, Indiana, and found low but positive correlations between socio-economic status and various measures of reading ability. The main purpose of the study was to determine what effect, if any, membership in the Evansville Public Library's summer reading club had on reading skill; results pertinent to that purpose are reported elsewhere and are not discussed in this paper.[40] The total of 1,718 fourth graders enrolled in 35 public elementary schools were given a reading test in the spring of 1962 and again in the fall after they had started the fifth grade. The following information about each pupil was recorded--age, sex, IQ, socio-economic level, reading grade received in the fourth grade, spring reading test score, fall reading test score, and whether the child had joined the summer reading club. The socio-economic level was estimated by an informed person's ranking each of the 35 schools on a scale of socio-economic status from one to five, one being the lowest and five the highest. The correlation was .28 between socio-economic status and fifth grade reading test score; this is larger than would be expected to occur solely by chance and indicates that there was some tendency for children of higher socio-economic status to receive higher test scores. Correlations obtained between socio-economic status and other variables are as follows:

fourth grade reading test score	.27
fourth grade reading grade	.11
reading club membership	.10
IQ	.23

Causes of Reading Problems Among the Disadvantaged

There has been much speculation on the reasons why most of the disadvantaged seem to be less skilled in reading and generally less talented academically than people who belong to more privileged socio-economic groups. Although there is by no means complete understanding of the situation, many authorities feel that attitudes developed in the home and neighborhood have

considerable influence on a person's progress in reading, and that lower-class environment does not promote good reading habits. Gray wrote, "For decades teachers have recognized that a child's social environment and relationships are potent factors in determining his attitude toward reading and what he may want to read about. As commonly reported, these attitudes are acquired through contacts in the home, the neighborhood, the church and other social institutions."[41]

Esther Milner studied the language IQ of children of various socio-economic levels and concluded that the kind of home in which a child lived had an important influence on his language skills. She wrote that the high-scoring children were surrounded by a much richer verbal family environment than the low-scoring children. The higher scorers had more books available to them than the low scorers, the former were read to more often than the latter, and the former had "more opportunities for emotionally positive interaction with the parents" than the latter.[42]

Bond and Wagner wrote that attitudes toward reading begin very early in the home, and they suggest that these attitudes have a potent influence on a child's progress in reading. Some children begin first grade with the attitude that reading is "a useful and pleasant pursuit," while others are unfamiliar with reading and have never seen anyone "gain information or enjoyment from reading."[43]

Margolin, Roman, and Harari did a study of reading retardation among delinquent children, and concluded that children from the lowest socio-economic group did not have the necessary attitudes or experiences to prepare them for schools which are, in general, geared for middle-class children. According to them, the disadvantaged delinquent: "...is deficient in preschool readiness experience. Attitudinally he is unprepared for school living and learning. His use of oral English is poor, and in view of the subcultural de-emphasis of verbal communication, his interest in language skills is minimal. The books and materials used in the school system are essentially geared to the middle-class child and have little meaning to the child from an underprivileged background."[44] They argue that a middle-class child may have difficulty learning but wants to do so, and "confesses with guilt and anxiety that he cannot," while the average delinquent lower-class child could have learned but was not interested in doing so.[45] "Thus we may conclude," they say, "that in the majority of our cases conflict between the middle-class educational experience and lower-socio-economic-class forces induces certain psychodynamic processes which tend to produce reading retardation and emotional disturbances."[46]

Havighurst has said that much potential talent is lost because girls and lower-class children of both sexes are not provided with the proper stimulation to learn. He contended that about half of the ablest 20% of America's gifted children never develop their abilities fully:

> Girls, and children from families of low socioeconomic status, from the two large groups of persons with potentially high ability whose environment has not provided stimulation for the development of talent. Children from low-status families fail to develop their abilities because of lack of opportunity and stimulation--a lack commencing in their earliest years. Their families do not encourage them to read, to learn music, to draw pictures, to develop scientific hobbies, or to do any of the things that can bring budding talent into flower.[47]

A. A. Fabian studied the children who had serious reading problems, and found that a large proportion were from homes in which there was "massive familial psychopathology," e.g., some of the parents were neurotic or psychotic.[48]

Delmo Della-Dora wrote the following comments about the relationship between health and parental attitudes to learning: "Lower social class children evidence a relatively high rate of illness and nutritional deficiencies. They are ignorant of good health practices and/or cannot afford to observe them. They show little interest in or motivation for school affairs. Parents exhibit apathy toward school and a high incidence of social or emotional maladjustment. There are few books or other learning media [available to them]."[49]

A number of studies indicate that underprivileged children have less intelligence as measured by standard IQ tests than do other children.[50] This circumstance could in itself be a cause of low reading skill, since reading is a complex intellectual activity which requires intelligence. Conversely, however, poor performance on IQ tests could be due to a lack of reading skill. Gray wrote that the reading difficulties of the disadvantaged may sometimes be due to low intelligence, but he felt that it was probably of more significance that the previous experiences of the underprivileged had not "predisposed them toward reading or awakened interest that can easily be satisfied through reading."[51] Moreover, some authorities feel intelligence tests are culturally biased in favor of middle-and upper-class children. In other words, many questions which are asked are about things with which middle-and upper-class children, but not lower class children would be familiar. Kenneth Eels wrote of cultural bias that "Current controversy and doubts regarding possible cultural bias in intelligence tests have arisen in a number of places, and from different sources....More recently an increasing body of research knowledge has become available which suggests the possibility that the scores on most intelligence tests are influenced substantially by the nature of the cultural material contained in the test."[52]

Richard and Robert Schmuck's description of the way in which Binet constructed his intelligence test provides further light on this subject:

> He merely went to the particular social groups which seemed to him to be breeding grounds for precocious youngsters and to other groups which struck him as being the kinds which bred and trained the 'duller' children. He was interested in predicting success in school and not some mystical quality hidden in the cerebrum. In essence, the social group which he thought to yield the successful students most often was the professional middle class, the head occupational people, the highly educated. And, conversely, the 'duller' children, the less successful students, came from the working class, the hands occupational group, the less well educated. He then repeatedly changed his test until the high and low scores went to children from these two social groups respectively.[53]

Riessman gives the following summary of the "conventional" reasons educators usually give to explain why the disadvantaged do not do well in reading or in other subjects:

(1) the lack of an 'educational tradition' in the home, few books, etc.
(2) insufficient language and reading skills.
(3) inadequate motivation to pursue a long-range educational career, and poor estimate of self.
(4) antagonism toward the school, the teacher.
(5) poor health, improper diet, frequent moving, and noisy TV-ridden homes.[54]

Riessman also believes the schools must share some of the blame for the poor performance of the disadvantaged, however, and he lists the following factors as possible causes of such failure:

(1) the discrimination, frequently unintentional, seen in the classroom, Parent-Teacher Association, guidance office, psychological testing program, etc., which alienates Johnny and his family.
(2) Johnny's ambivalence toward education--not simply rejection of it--his lack of school know-how, test-taking skills, information concerning college, and his anti-intellectualism.
(3) the culture of the school which overlooks and underestimates his particular skills and mode of intellectual functioning that arise out of his culture and way of life.
(4) the deficits in Johnny's background which necessitate special transitional techniques to bring him into the academic mainstream. These do not require a 'soft' approach, a lowering of standards, a capitulation to his deficiencies.[55]

The Reading Interests of the Culturally Disadvantaged

A number of research studies indicate that both reading and library use among adults are strongly related to socio-economic status, those persons of lower status generally doing less reading and using libraries less than do others. On the other hand there is only limited evidence of the kinds of materials disadvantaged adults prefer to read, although several investigators report that they generally prefer "recreational" over "serious" types of reading. To summarize the results of research on the amount of reading and social status, Gray wrote: "The amount read differs widely...among occupational groups and with the socio-economic status of individuals....Those who belong to professional groups, for example, read as a rule about twice as much daily as those belonging to clerical groups and almost three times as much as those belonging to trade and labor groups."[56] Elsewhere Gray has written that socio-economic level "influences reading interests and habits to a notable extent," and he suggested that most lower class adults were mainly interested in recreational or sensational reading.[57]

Amount of Reading and Library Use Among Disadvantaged Adults

The book on adult reading by Gray and Munroe contains a discussion of a study by Rhey Boyd Parsons which was concerned with the amount of reading done

by various occupational groups. A table based on the Parsons' study indicates that 91.2% of professional people were reading a book when queried compared with 41.7% of those in trades and labor and 17.6% of those in agriculture.[58] The Gray and Munroe book also contains evidence that people of greater education do more reading than those of less education, and the authors discuss the reasons for this phenomenon as follows: "...adults who have had wide educational advantages read far more, as a rule, than those of more limited training. This is to be expected since educated people have broader interests which can be satisfied through reading. They are also thrown daily in contact with people who are well read and they consequently find it necessary to read extensively themselves in order to be equally well informed."[59]

Helen Ridgway did a study concerned with people of at least 21 years of age who did not use the public library. She made an attempt to get information on the amount of education of non-users but was not very successful because people were reluctant to give such information. She classified non-users by occupation and found that 3.5% were teachers, 6.6% were other professionals, 22.6% were homekeepers, 55.1% were other non-professionals, and 12.0% were unemployed, the latter group including only people who had retired or who were regularly dependent on others, not those who were temporarily out of work.[60] One can only speculate on the proportion of these non-users who might be considered disadvantaged, but it is interesting to note the relatively large proportion of them who were non-professional or unemployed.

Buswell found a strong positive relationship between the amount read by adults and the number of grades they had attended in school. He gives the following percentages of people of varying educational attainment who read a "considerable number" of books:[61]

Sixth grade education or less	9.2%
Seventh or eighth grade education	22.3%
Ninth or tenth grade education	35.2%
Eleventh or twelfth grade education	42.0%
Thirteenth grade education or more	62.3%

Several important studies published in 1946 indicate that adults of lower educational and socio-economic level are less interested in reading than other adults. In a study done by the National Opinion Research Center, the investigators discovered that reading was a "favorite diversion" of 62% of those surveyed who had attended college, of 43% of those who had attended high school, and of only 33% of those with an eighth grade education or less. Forty-one percent of those with a college background claimed that they spent at least an hour a day in reading while only 13% of those who did not complete grade school made the same claim. "...57 per cent of persons who have never gone beyond the eighth grade, 37 per cent of those with some high school training, and 21 per cent of the college-educated say they never read books or devote no more than half an hour a week to such reading."[62]

Link and Hopf conducted a national study of the reading of people 15 years of age and older, in which "active readers" were classified as those

who read a book yesterday or within the past month; "inactive readers" as those who read a book within the past year; and "nonreaders' as those who had not read a book within one year. They found that reading was related to both income and education. Table 2 contains their findings regarding the relationship between reading and income, and Table 3 their findings regarding reading and education.

TABLE 2

Readership by Income Level*

Type of Readers	Upper	Middle	Lower
Active Readers	64%	48%	36%
Inactive Readers	20	24	19
Nonreaders	16	28	45
Total Interviews	1,194	1,611	1,195

*Source: Link and Hopf, People and Books, p. 59.

TABLE 3

Readership by Educational Level*

Type of Readers	College	High School	Grade School
Active Readers	71%	51%	25%
Inactive Readers	19	24	19
Nonreaders	10	25	56
Total Interviews	1,151	1,705	1,115

*Source: Link and Hopf, People and Books, p. 60.

Link and Hopf concluded that formal education was a more important influence on book reading than income, because they found "a wider difference in the proportion of active readers between college and grade school (71 per cent to 25 per cent) than between the upper-income level and the lower (64 per cent to 36 per cent)." They also discovered that "the readership of books by those who have a college education is practically the same regardless of the income level."[63]

One of the best known books on library use is that by Bernard Berelson. Having made an extensive survey of library use studies, Berelson commented as follows on the relationship between use and education:

> In every case the proportion of people registered with or actively using the library rises sharply with the level of schooling....From 10 to 15 percent of adults having only a grade-school education are library users as compared with about four times as many of the college-educated. The sharp difference is attributable to the fact that people with more formal education read more easily, as well as to their reading habits. Those who have spent more years in a school system not only have had more training in the technique of reading but also they have come to rely more heavily on books as informational and recreational sources.[64]

In spite of these facts, Berelson believed that the majority of library patrons had little schooling. "...the library clientele itself is composed of people with little, rather than much, schooling simply because there are so many more poorly educated persons in the population at large....Thus, while people with little education use the library relatively much less that do the well-educated, they may still exceed the latter in absolute numbers."[65]

Campbell and Metzner discovered that "the extent of book-reading is highly related to both education and income."[66] They found that as education increased, book reading increased, and as income increased, book reading increased. The writers questioned respondents about the number of books read during the preceding year and then tabulated the responses by educational and income level. (See Table 4.)

TABLE 4

Relation of Number of Books Reported Read During Preceding Year to Various Population Characteristics

Schooling	Number of Books Reported Read During Preceding Year					
	None	1-4	5-9	10-49	50 or more	Number not Known
None or some grade school	74%	18%	2%	3%	2%	1%
Completed grade or some high school	57	16	6	16	3	2
Completed high school	26	22	12	29	10	1
Some or completed college	12	16	13	38	19	2
Annual Income						
Under $2,000	63%	17%	4%	11%	3%	2%
$2,000 - $3,999	50	17	9	17	6	1
$4,000 and over	30	18	9	28	13	2

*Source: Angus Campbell and Charles A. Metzner, Public Use of the Library and other Sources of Information, Rev. ed., p. 55.

In a study done of the Los Angeles Public Library, Field and Peacock Associates found that reading and library use were related to amount of education and income level. They discovered, for example, that of those interviewees who had completed college, 58% had last read a book during the past week; of those who had completed grade school, 33% had last read a book during the past week; and of those who had not finished grade school, only 26% had last read a book during the same time period.[67] Interviewees were asked whether they had visited the library during the 30 days preceding the interview. The percentages who had done so are as follows:[68]

28% who were in the upper income bracket
22% in the middle income bracket
16% in the lower income bracket
5% who had none or some grade school
9% who completed grade school
19% who had some high school
22% who had completed high school
36% who had some college
31% who completed college

In a study of residents in Derby, England, Cauter and Downham discovered that book reading and library use were related to social class and education. They found that book reading was more popular with the middle-class than with the working class and with people of secondary or further education than with those of only elementary education.[69] Interviewees were asked whether they were currently reading a book; 40% of those classified as middle-class and 26% of those classified as working class said "yes." The following percentages of respondents, classified by educational attainment, reported that they were reading a book: further education 53%, secondary education 41%, and elementary education 25%. Of the interviewees in non-manual occupations, 36% reported they were reading a book while 27% of skilled workers and 25% of semi-skilled or unskilled workers reported they were doing so.[70] Cauter and Downham's findings regarding the relationship between library use and social characteristics are shown in Table 5.

Another British study--one directed by Brian Groombridge--was concerned with adult use of public libraries in London. Basically, the findings of this study are similar to those of the Cauter and Downham study and to studies of library use done in America--positive relationships were found between education and library use, but these relationships were not "absolute." Groombridge reports that the proportion of library members to the total population was strongly related to the educational levels of particular boroughs. In Hampstead, for example, where 12.5% of the residents of 20 to 24 years of age were in school full-time, 481 per 1,000 people were members of the public library. On the other hand, in Stepney where only 1.5% of the population of 20 to 24 years were in school full-time, only 177 per 1,000 residents were library members.[71] Groombridge commented as follows:

TABLE 5

Book Borrowing from Libraries
by Occupation, Class, and Education *

	Percentage Who Borrow Books from a Library		
	At all	From a public library	From a commercial library
Occupation			
Non-manual	46%	33%	19%
Manual--skilled	30	20	11
Manual--semi-and unskilled	22	13	9
Not in paid employment	37	27	11
Class			
Middle	53%	39%	18%
Working	29	20	11
Education			
Further	62%	50%	14%
Secondary	55	41	21
Elementary	29	19	10

*Source: Cauter and Downham, p. 196.

> The Census data shows for instance that the people of Hampstead are very much better educated than the people of Stepney, and while graduate residents abound in the one borough they are hard to come by in the other. The difference is so great that it is hardly necessary to look further for an explanation of the different registration-population ratios in the two places. Whereas in Hampstead it might be enough to have a collection of books, open your doors and then step back to control the hordes of eager readers, in Stepney probably every enrolled reader has to be worked for, and hard.[72]

Table 6 shows the relationship between education and library membership, from Groombridge.

TABLE 6

Age of Completing Full-Time Education
for Library Members, Former Members, and Non-Members*

Age of Completing Education	Members	Former Members	Non-Members	Total
Under 15	40%	49%	67%	53%
15 or 16	25	31	17	24
17 or over	35	20	14	23
Total number	160	144	195	499

*Source: Groombridge, p. 35.

Groombridge notes that the "influence of education is manifest" yet not "absolute" and cautions that its influence should not be overestimated:

> Common sense expectations are confirmed: for instance, a far higher proportion of members than of those not in membership experienced prolonged education, and nearly seven in every ten of those men and women who have never been members left school before their fifteenth birthday. The majorities are found ..where they would be expected; but it is the minorities, the exceptional people, that are interesting and challenging, the well-educated person who never sets foot in his library, the poorly-educated one who is a regular reader....[The table] can be studied both for its demonstration of the rule and for its revelation of the many exceptions to it....Forty per cent of the members also left school before they were 15, and 20 per cent of the people who have given up being members were educated to 17 years of age and more. Seven per cent of those who never were members were educated until they were at least 19.[73]

In an apparent attempt to understand one possible cause of library membership or non-membership, respondents were asked whether they had been encouraged to use public libraries when they were in school; the greater proportion of those who reported they had been so encouraged were library members than of those who did not report such encouragement. Those who reported school encouragement referred most often to the influence of teachers. Other types of encouragement referred to were "the general atmosphere in the school...the example of a school library,...[and] specially organized visits to public libraries."[74] Noting that school encouragement seemed to have some influence on public library membership, Groombridge wrote:

> The reluctant ratepayer and the harassed teacher, who must sometimes wonder whether what happens in school ever has any long-term effect, will be joined, however, by the pragmatic public librarian, in wanting to know whether school encouragement leads to action. The short answer is 'yes': if the efforts of schools made little or no difference, then the encouraged and not-encouraged would be found more or less evenly spread among the members, the former members and the non-members. This is emphatically not so.[75]

In a questionnaire study of the use of commercial media by college students and adults, McDonald and Craig found a positive relationship between amount of education and book reading. They report that "Educational level is the most significant single factor related to book reading. The percentage of those claiming to have read at least one book [in the previous year] increases steadily with educational level, as shown below:"

Less than 8 years of school.....20%
8-11 years of school.....48%
12-13 years of school.....62%
14-15 years of school.....73%
16 and more years of school.....76%[76]

Jere Hoar, who interviewed 200 persons, 60 years and older, in a rural Mississippi community, found that reading habits were related to education and age. He reports as follows:

> More variation was observed when book reading was examined in connection with education than with age. As education increased there was a drop in the percentage of females who claimed no book reading. Book reading claims were about two times as frequent among graduate school educated males as among males with less education....An examination of responses seems to indicate that the older a person was the more likely he was to have read a book 'recently'. And the percentage of respondents who said they had read a book within a year increased with each educational level.[77]

There have been a number of studies on the readership of periodicals, and it has generally been found that people of lower socio-economic level read magazines and newspapers somewhat less than do others, but the differences between social groups are not as pronounced as those found in book reading. In a study of about 500 adult women, Witty found that the amount of newspaper and periodical reading was rather similar for all income groups above the very lowest group; women in four annual income groups above $1250 "read regularly or subscribe to somewhat similar numbers of magazines," while women in the lowest group read or subscribed to fewer magazines.[78] In regard to newspapers, "There was little difference in the kind or number of newspapers found in the several income groups above the lowest one ($1250 or less). The lowest group reported an average of one newspaper per home; the other groups averaged about two."[79]

In his study of radio and print, Lazarsfeld discovered that the relationship between economic status and listening to radio news was very low while "the proportion of people reading daily newspapers shows a marked decline with declining economic status."[80] (See Table 7.)

TABLE 7

Sex, Economic Level, and Size of Locality as Affecting News Reading and Listening*

Size of Locality and Economic Level	Proportion Who Are Regular Radio News Listeners		Proportion Who Are Regular Newspaper Readers	
Cities of 100,000 and over	Males	Females	Males	Females
High	66.1%	64.6%	98.0%	89.9%
Medium	68.8	63.1	94.2	84.3
Low	69.4	60.6	84.7	79.3
Farms and towns under 2,500				
High	70.5%	72.7%	89.7%	80.0%
Medium	71.9	75.7	86.2	83.9
Low	66.6	67.1	67.7	63.7

*Source: Lazarsfeld, p. 224.

Lazarsfeld also found that the greater the amount of formal education of a group, the greater was the likelihood that group members would do reading as a consequence of listening to radio programs. The following percentages of readers (by educational level) reported that they did follow-up reading:

Elementary school education	15.8%
High school education	31.0%
College education	36.7%[81]

Schramm and White did a readership study of a local evening newspaper in an Illinois city of approximately 100,000 population, and discovered that the amount of newsreading increased with age, education, and economic status.[82]

Campbell and Metzner found a strong positive relationship between amount of education and the reading of newspapers, magazines, and government pamphlets. They found that most adults regularly read a newspaper, but that "among the people who did not complete grammar school a sizeable group (about a third)... never see a paper, or...read one only occasionally."[83] Of the people surveyed, 19% of those with none or some grade school education reported they did not read newspapers, while only 1% of those who had completed high school and none of those who had had some college education made the same report.[84] Fifty-five percent of those who had none or some grade school education did not read any magazines regularly, while only 17% of those who had completed high school and 9% of those who had some college or had completed college reported that they did not do so.[85] When asked whether they had read government pamphlets, 34% of those who had none or some grade school answered "yes," while 67% of those who had had at least some college also answered affirmatively.[86]

Dale and Chall collected information on the readership of six popular magazines from their publishers and found that "persons with only an eighth-grade education scarcely read these magazines at all," the majority of readers having at least a high school education.[87] Table 8 shows their findings regarding percentages of magazine readers by educational levels.

TABLE 8

Educational Levels Achieved by Readers of Certain Leading Magazines*

Highest Educational Level Achieved	Percentage Distribution of Readers					
	Look	Newsweek	Atlantic Monthly	Reporter	Time	Life
College degree and above	**	35.3%	63.9%	68.5%	40.9%	**
Some college	23.2	25.7	21.8	16.8	27.1	45.2
High school graduate	54.3	**	11.1	7.9	19.7	21.8
Some high school	22.5	34.1	2.0	3.8	7.1	13.5
Eighth grade or less	**	4.9	1.2	3.0	5.2	19.5
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

*Source: Dale and Chall, "Developing Readable Materials," p. 223.
**Dale and Chall report these figures were not available.

McDonald and Craig also found that magazine reading increased with education.

> Adults with less than 8 years of education read an average of 1.3 magazines
> Adults with 8-11 years of education read an average of 2.5 magazines
> Adults with 12-13 years of education read an average of 4.1 magazines
> Adults with 14-15 years of education read an average of 6.4 magazines
> Adults with 16 and more years of education read an average of 6.0 magazines.[88]

The American Newspaper Publishers Association did a survey of newspaper reading in 1961, and it was found that a large majority of adults read newspapers regularly. Only among those with less than five years of schooling was newspaper reading reported by fewer than half of the respondents--45%.[89] The investigators also found a relationship between newspaper reading and income. (See Table 9) There was "a sharp drop-off only in the lowest family income category--under $3,000."[90]

TABLE 9

Average Day Readership of Newspapers by Family Income*

Respondent	Under $3,000	$3,000-$4,999	$5,000-$7,499	$7,500-$9,999	$10,000 and over
Householder	70%	86%	93%	95%	95%
Adult Readers	61%	78%	87%	89%	91%

*Source: American Newspaper Publishers Association, The Daily Newspaper and Its Reading Public, p. 24.

Kinds of Reading Preferred by Disadvantaged Adults

Some investigators have found that the kinds of reading preferred by adults of lower socio-economic status are somewhat different than the reading preferred by other adults. Waples and Tyler list those factors which they considered most responsible for differences in reading interests, and several of them are related to socio-economic status. "The conclusions are that of the conditions affecting group reading interests in different degrees, sex has most effect, amount of schooling next, occupation next, and the other conditions in the order listed."[91] The "other conditions" and the order in which they are listed are environment, age, size of community, and time spent in reading.

In the 1932 Witty study mentioned above, 503 adult women were surveyed in order "to ascertain the relation of the economic status of the women to the amount and type of material read." Witty classified the respondents into five income levels, from those whose average annual income was less than $1,200 to those who average annual income was over $7,500.[92] Among other things, he found a positive relationship between fiction reading and income. Those in the lowest income bracket reported they had read no fiction during the preceding six months.[93] Little poetry was read by any of the five groups, but those in the lowest economic group reported they had read no poetry at all, while the amount read by those in the higher groups was about evenly distributed.

Grace Kelley has little to say about the reading interest of various socio-economic groups in her report on reading in Woodside, Queens Borough, New York, but she does report that people of lower educational attainment were less interested in reading the classics than were others.[94] On the other hand, members of the lower economic and educational groups expressed considerably greater interest in reading about "serious life problems" than those of higher economic or educational status.[95]

Jeannette H. Foster studied the fiction reading records of a large group of readers and found some differences in the kind of reading done by members of various types of occupations. She ranked authors in different categories according to the quality of their writing, which she admitted was not completely valid since some authors write works which are diverse in quality. She found that readers of professional occupations generally read the higher quality authors more than did other readers. Those in the shop-owning and salesman

class showed the same tendency as the professionals although not quite so strongly. She found that people employed in the kinds of occupations associated with lower socio-economic occupations read lower quality authors: "Both skilled trades and unskilled labor showed larger percentages of readers in the lower than in the higher levels with the balance of quality in favor of the skilled workers."[96] Foster discovered that readers in the unskilled labor classification, which included female domestic workers, preferred love stories, humor, detective stories, and surprisingly, works on philosophical problems. Skilled workers preferred "humor and satire to other classes, with adventure and detective stories close seconds."[97]

Laurel Krieg studied the library borrowing habits of residents of Alliance, Ohio. Table 10 contains her findings regarding library use and occupation. This table gives some indication that people employed in kinds of occupations usually associated with lower socio-economic status borrowed more light literature than did other people. This finding must be considered somewhat skeptically, however, since adult borrowers were grouped according to the Census Bureau classifications of occupations. Krieg comments that "This is not entirely satisfactory, since it takes no account of social status, education, or ability, classing the garment worker and the potter with the manager of a large factory. It was chosen because it seemed the best available at the time the study was undertaken."[98]

TABLE 10

Proportion of Non-Fiction and Fiction Borrowed by Members of Various Occupational Groups*

Occupational Group	Non-Fiction	Fiction			
		Standard	Good Modern	Light	Total
Agriculture, men	7.7%	0%	23.1%	69.2%	100%
Manufacturing, men	20.9	2.6	10.8	65.7	100
Manufacturing, women	0	0	18.2	81.1	100
Professional service, men	50.0	1.0	20.6	28.4	100
Professional service, women	42.3	5.1	18.9	33.7	100
Domestic, men	22.2	0	27.8	50.0	100
Domestic, women	7.2	0	14.3	78.5	100

*Source: Laurel Krieg, "Community Studies in Reading. IV A Middle-Western Manufacturing Community," Library Quarterly, IX (January, 1939), p. 82.

In the later study done by the National Opinion Research Center, surveyors found relatively little difference in the fiction and non-fiction reading preferences of people of varying levels of education (See Table 11).

TABLE 11

Percentage of People by Education Who Prefer Fiction or Non-Fiction*

Educational Level	Non-Fiction	Fiction	Both About the Same	Undecided
Attended college	51%	30%	20%	less than 0.5%
Eighth grade or less	47	30	14	8
Attended high school	39	42	17	2

*Source: National Opinion Research Center, What...Where...Why...Do People Read? p. 7.

Campbell and Metzner also studied the fiction and non-fiction preferences of people of varying educational accomplishments and found some rather large differences in the preferences of different educational groups (See Table 12).

TABLE 12

Relation of Kind of Books Read to Educational Achievement Among Book Readers

Educational Achievement	All Fiction	Mainly Fiction	Mainly Non-Fiction	All Non-Fiction	Only the Bible
None or some grade school	41%	12%	2%	10%	15%
Completed grade or some high school	67	14	6	9	2
Completed high schcol	53	28	12	5	--
Some or all college	37	28	26	8	--
All readers	50	21	12	8	4

*Source: Angus Campbell and Charles A. Metzner, Public Use of the Library and Other Sources of Information, Rev. ed., p. 57.

The Krieg study and the Campbell and Metzner study suggest that the upper socio-economic group is more prone to prefer non-fiction than the lower group, while the study done by the National Opinion Research Center suggests little difference between the upper and lower groups. Because the studies have contradictory results, it would be difficult to make any generalizations on this matter until further research is done.

In the classic study of life in "Yankee City," Warner and Lunt report considerable differences in the reading habits and interests of members of six social classes. They found that "reading habits were highly influenced by class values."[99] People read certain books, magazines, and newspapers, according to their place in the class hierarchy. There is some indication that members of the lower classes preferred a lighter, less serious type of literature. Warner and Lunt describe the kinds of reading done by various classes:

> The members of the upper-upper class evinced more than an average interest in books which were concerned with science and with biography and history; they were also interested more than the average in detective stories, farce and humor, and books in which the predominant interest was patriotism and warfare. The lower-upper class had an above-average reading preference for books in which the dominant interest was man's struggle against fate. They were also interested in books where warfare was the predominant theme, and in books of biography and history. The upper-middle-class readers had an above-average interest in books on social techniques, courtship and the family, and warfare. The lower-middle class showed a strong preference for books on courtship and family. The upper-lower class were interested in children's books and those of farce and humor, while the lower-lower had an interest above the average in children's books, adventure and detective stories, farce and humor, and man's struggle against fate.[100]

Other findings which are particularly interesting in a survey of the reading of the culturally disadvantaged are the following. It was found that "the lower-lower class is the only one which read adventure stories above the average for the general population." The lower-lower class read more books of fantasy, some of which were written for children, than any other class and fewer books on warfare and the nation than any other class.[101] One interesting similarity in the reading of the upper-upper and lower-lower classes was that they both "read a larger percentage of detective stories than the readers of any other class; 22.73 per cent of all the books read by the upper-upper class and 20.33 per cent of those read by the lower-lower class belonged in this category."[102]

Table 13 is adapted from Warner and Lunt's book and contains information on the book reading of the upper-lower and lower-lower classes. The percentage figures refer to the proportion of books read by each group. For example, 4.30% of all the books read by the upper-lower class belong in the "Social Techniques" category.

Schramm and White found that newspaper readers of low socio-economic status were very interested in crime and disaster news. They report that adults with only grade school education and those of the lower economic status "are more likely to read crime and disaster news than any other broad class of news."[103] The reading of crime news and the reading of comics declined somewhat with rising economic status and education; in general, the reading of the following types of materials increased with higher socio-economic status: editorials, public affairs news, sports news, society news,

TABLE 13

Percentage Distribution of Book Reading of the Upper-Lower and Lower-Lower Classes by Subjects

Subjects	Social Class	
	Upper-Lower (29.53% of total of all classes)	Lower-Lower (19.19% of total of all classes)
Social Techniques	4.30%	2.90%
Science	--	--
Biography and History	1.68	0.97
Children-Fantasy	4.93	7.10
Adventure	16.04	19.35
Detective	18.45	20.33
Farce and Humor	2.31	2.42
Courtship and Family	21.48	16.45
Class and Mobility	11.95	11.13
Nation-Fight	6.29	5.00
Fate	12.47	14.35

*Source: W. Lloyd Warner and Paul S. Lunt, The Social Life of a Modern Community, p. 384.

and political and editorial cartoons. "Summarizing reading patterns by education..., it appears that readers on the lower end of the educational curve tend to use the newspaper for entertainment, sensational news, and pictorial material. Those at the top of the educational curve tend to use it less for entertainment, more for information on public affairs."[104]

One of the investigators who found atypical reading preferences among some of those of lower socio-economic status was Ruth Strang. She found, for example, that a Negro draftsman of the lowest socio-economic level preferred to read poetry, and books or articles on the problems of the Negro race.[105] Feeling strongly that many people differed from the average for their group as far as reading interests are concerned, Strang wrote: "Persons in the same occupational groups do not have characteristic patterns of reading interests and ability. A busboy in a restaurant reads poetry extensively; a clerk in a bookstore reads practically nothing except books and articles related to music. The explanation of this marked variation in reading patterns among people of the same age, occupation, socioeconomic status, and geographical location lies in the hundreds of single factors which influence a person's reading."[106]

Reading Interests of Disadvantaged Children

Investigators are not agreed whether the amount of reading or the type of reading done by disadvantaged children differs from the reading of other

children. One study which supports the contentien that interest in books is related to socio-economic status was done by Mark Abrams. A national sample of 1,500 British children of 8 to 15 years of age was studied, and it was found that, in general, middle-class children preferred book reading over television watching while most working class children preferred television over books. The percentages are given in Table 14. Abrams concludes that "For middle class children with television, the popularity of viewing still takes second place to the pleasure of reading; but for children in working class homes nothing surpasses or even matches the attractions of watching television."[107]

TABLE 14

Percentage of Children Preferring Book Reading or Television*

Preference	Middle Class Children		Working Class Children	
	In Television Homes	In Homes Without TV	In Television Homes	In Homes Without TV
Read Books	37%	40%	25%	25%
Watch Television	32	22	37	30

*Source: Mark Abrams, "Child Audiences for Television in Great Britain," p. 41.

Alice Sterner did a study of the use of various media by high school students and found little relationship between socio-economic status and reading, listening, or other interests. Socio-economic status was determined by ranking each block in which pupils lived in one of five categories--very poor, poor, fair, good, or superior. Finding little relationship between any of the variables studied, Sterner wrote:

> The relationship of sex, age, grade, marks, intelligence, or socio-economic status to youthful choices of interests, media, or specific titles within media is slight. One cannot safely predict to which pupil the appeal of the adventure, humor, or love interest will be most forceful. Only on the basis of sex differences is there any real diversity in the pursuit of these themes, girls being more apt to seek romance and to read romantic magazines than are boys. Likewise, there appears to be little relationship between the amount of activity in any specific medium and factors in adolescent life. One exception can be cited: girls are likely to read more magazines than boys.[108]

Commenting specifically on the influence of socio-economic status, Sterner said, "Socio-economic status does not seem to condition choices of interests, media, and specific titles within media. High school pupils appear to have almost equal access to and actually to make use of all these media regardless of social or economic position...."[109] She also found the interests of Negro

students were very similar to those of whites. Over 15 percent of her sample were Negroes, and their media activities "followed closely the habits of their white classmates."[110]

Anderson and Crawley also studied the reading interests of Negro high school students, and, like Sterner, they found that the reading interests of the Negro students were not very different from those of white students. The investigators report that students who were studied in the Negro high school read "essentially the same types of books and periodicals" reported to be read by students in other American secondary schools "in which investigations of this type have been made."[111] They found that both boys and girls read a great deal of fiction, the girls reading somewhat more. Most of the students did not seem to be interested in sentimental stories or "trashy" literature.[112]

Dwight Burton gave a test of literary appreciation to students in three Minnesota high schools--the Short Story Comparison Test, consisting of two published stories. One story represented "typical stereotypes, superficial fiction," and the other was an example of mature literary art.[113] Results of the study suggest that "socio-economic background determines to some extent a student's ability to appreciate literature."[114]

Vandament and Thalman studied 1,034 children in grades six and ten in order "to discover whether certain types of reading fantasy are preferred above others by children of different age groups, socio-economic strata, sex groups, and residential groups." They found little relationship between socio-economic level and interest, and comment that "Perhaps the most interesting and most significant findings of this study take the form of the lack of significance found when the reading preferences of the various socio-economic groups were analyzed according to fantasy content."[115]

Carsley studied the book reading interests of children of ten and eleven years of age and found little relationship between socio-economic level and interests. He discovered there were more differences between boys and girls than between groups of children from different social areas. This was particularly true in their attitude toward school stories, some classes of non-fiction, and poetry.[116]

Conclusions and Implications for Libraries

Research provides rather conclusive answers to some important questions about the reading of the culturally disadvantaged, but it does not provide satisfactory answers to other equally important questions. There is some evidence that adults of low socio-economic status are generally less skilled readers than are other adults, but the evidence is not conclusive since there has been so little study of adult reading ability. There has been much more study of children's reading skills and it seems clear that most disadvantaged children have less ability than most children of higher socio-economic status. Research shows quite definitely that disadvantaged adults generally read less and use libraries less than do other adults. There is some limited evidence that the former group has less "serious" reading interests than other adults, but this evidence is meagre and inconclusive. The picture is even less clear regarding

the reading interests of disadvantaged children. Some investigators have found no relationship between the reading interests of children and young people and their socio-economic status while others have found some relationship. Most research studies indicate that a minority of the disadvantaged deviate from the norm for their group; for example, a number of investigators have found that while a majority of the disadvantaged are rather poor readers, a minority of them have considerable reading skill. Others have discovered that while a majority of the disadvantaged read little or use libraries infrequently, a minority use books and libraries often.

Since there has been little study of the reading ability of adults, more research is needed in order to provide conclusive evidence of how well the disadvantaged, as well as other, adults read. Research does not present a clear picture of the reading interests of disadvantaged adults or children; therefore more, and more discerning, studies are needed in order to ascertain whether the disadvantaged have certain common reading interests, what those interests are, and whether those interests differ from the interests of other socio-economic groups.

Besides descriptive studies, there is a genuine need for research which is concerned with causal relationships. There has been much speculation on the causes of such phenomena as the low reading skill of the disadvantaged and the small amount of reading and library use among that group, but little objective study of possible causes. Research involving causal relationships would be most desirable because an understanding of cause sometimes makes it possible to improve situations. For example, if educators really understood why disadvantaged children have less reading skill than other children, they might be able to devise new teaching methods to improve their skill. If librarians understood why most disadvantaged adults make relatively little use of libraries, they might be able to modify library service in such a way that use by that group would increase.

Research studies indicate that the average disadvantaged person has a relatively low level of reading ability; therefore, it seems imperative that libraries, particularly those in disadvantaged communities, provide materials which are easy to read. Such books are available for children, but it is difficult to obtain adult books which are written in a simple style. Fortunately, publishers are now producing more of these high-interest, low-reading-level books now than in former years. A number of the studies also indicate that a minority of the disadvantaged are good readers; therefore reader's advisers need to find out something about each disadvantaged person's reading skill in order not to assume that because he is economically poor he is necessarily a poor reader.

Since research does not provide satisfactory answers regarding the kinds of things which groups of people want to read about, the best way the librarian can find out about a patron's reading interests is by interviewing the individual patron. This necessity for individual interview strengthens the argument that public libraries need reader's advisers or reader's consultants who have time to talk with patrons, to recommend books, and to draw up individualized reading programs. Many reports indicate that reader's advisers were popular figures in public libraries some years ago; the service was discontinued in many libraries, however, because of lack of

funds. Since libraries are now better supported than ever before, it would seem that this valuable, personal service should be reinstated.

American librarians have always been interested in promoting educational and cultural reading and appreciation among all of our population, but research clearly shows that a large portion of our population--adults of low socio-economic status--make relatively little or no use of books and libraries. Certainly librarians should make special efforts to promote reading among this very group which has so few educational or cultural opportunities and which probably needs the help which books can provide even more than our more fortunate citizens. According to various reports, including the recent study by Bernice MacDonald,[117] some public libraries have already expended considerable effort on service to disadvantaged adults, by such methods as: giving book talks to clubs and organizations in low-income neighborhoods; providing special services to labor groups; circulating booklists particularly designed for adults with little reading skill; and conducting lectures, film forums, or discussion groups in disadvantaged communities. On the other hand, some libraries have concentrated on providing services for the middle-and upper-classes and have largely neglected the disadvantaged.[118]

Research shows that disadvantaged children generally have more reading difficulties than other children, and there is some evidence (although not conclusive) that they are less interested in reading than other children; therefore, it seems imperative that school and public librarians identify these children, discuss their reading problems and interests with them, and help them select books. Moreover, when organizing reading programs or library clubs, librarians should make a special effort to involve disadvantaged children, since they are often reluctant to join such groups, not because they are uninterested, but because they do not feel at ease in groups which are composed mainly of middle-and upper-class children.

Heretofore, American libraries have been most successful with the middle and upper socio-economic groups. At the present time, librarians face the challenge of achieving similar success with the cultural disadvantaged. If such success is to be realized, great efforts will be required of the library profession.

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